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Some Movies We Missed

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, the Hawaiian Historical Society published my survey of 120 feature motion pictures made in or about Hawai'i between the earliest such efforts and Statehood.¹ Inevitably, some movies were overlooked, and new information later came to light on those already listed.

Fifteen feature films are included in this addendum, 12 of them unmentioned in my 1988 monograph. Seven of the 12 were obviously shot at Mainland locales masquerading as Hawaiian settings, two were locally filmed but represented non-Hawaiian locations, one was a documentary with actual Island scenes, and two supposedly took place en route to Hawai'i. Eight of the 12 were released between 1915 and 1920, one each in 1937 and 1941, and two in 1958. In addition, the references to three movies already cited in the earlier work benefited from newly published, more detailed descriptions.

1915

The Beachcomber

Bosworth, Inc. Copyright 4 Jan. 1915, but neither the Mainland nor Honolulu release date is known. Sil., b&w., length NA.

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Prod., Hobart Bosworth. With Hobart Bosworth, Helen Wolcott, Mr. Rahawanaku (spelling uncertain). The latter was the only non-Caucasian name in the cast.

Lost overboard in a storm in Hawaiian waters, a sailor is rescued by an Islander, Kane Pili. Tempted by Pili's sister, Taleaa, and the easy island life, the sailor is about to become a dissolute beachcomber when a message in a bottle revives his childhood religiosity. Taleaa, angered when he rejects her advances, frames him for desecrating an idol but intervenes at the last moment to save his life. The sailor leaves the island to "take up residence in a Christian community." Reconsidering, he returns to Hawai'i, brings Pili and Taleaa back to the Mainland, and marries the girl.²

1916

It Happened in Honolulu

Universal Film Mfg. Co. Rel. 26 June 1916; Hon., NA. Sil., b&w, 5 reels. Dir., Lynn Reynolds. With Myrtle Gonzales, Val Paul, George Hernandez. Previously cited but without credits or plot summary.

A Mainland mother wants her daughter to marry an English lord in a Hawaiian wedding. The girl's true love, a wholesale fish dealer, follows the wedding party to Honolulu, and when the mother dozes off during the ceremony, replaces the lord at the altar.³

The Diamond Runners

Signal Film Corp.; dist., Mutual Film Corp. Rel. 28 Aug. 1916; Hon., NA. Sil., b&w, 5 reels. Dir., J. P. McGowan. With Helen Holmes, Paul Hurst, Leo D. Maloney, Thomas Lingham.

A woman working with diamond thieves in South Africa falls in love with the secret service agent trailing them and helps to bring the gang to justice. According to the American Film Institute, "Much of this film was shot in Hawaii."⁴

1917

A Trip Through Japan

Trans-Pacific Films, Ltd.; dis., State Rights (?). Rel. 1917 (?); Hon., NA. Sil., b&w, 5 reels. Dir., William H. Bradshaw.

A documentary containing scenes shot in San Francisco, the Hawaiian Islands, and Japan.⁵

The Babes in the Woods

Fox Film Corp. Rel. 2 Dec. 1917; Hon., NA. Sil., b&w, 5 reels. Dir., Chester M. and Sidney A. Franklin. With Francis Carpenter, Virginia Lee Corbin. Based on the Grimm Brothers' "Hansel and Gretel."

A millionaire tests his wife's fidelity by bequeathing his entire fortune to his young son and daughter, then disappearing. In hiding, he learns from the butler that his wife and brother plan to kill the children. He returns and, to warn the children, tells them the story of "Hansel and Gretel." The wife overhears his tale, repents, and the family has a tearful reunion. "Some scenes in this film were shot in Hawaii, Hollywood, and at the Grand Canyon in Arizona."⁶

1918

Wild Woman

Universal Film Mfg. Co. Rel. 25 Feb. 1918; Hon., NA. Sil., b&w, 5 reels. Dir., Jack Ford. With Harry Carey, Molly Malone.

A cowboy visiting a Hawaiian-style bar in San Francisco drinks several Island cocktails and falls asleep. He dreams he is cast ashore in Hawai'i, where he is pursued by an aging queen and embraces a young princess. Awakening, he flees to his ranch.⁷

The Marriage Ring

Thomas H. Ince Corp.; dist., Famous Players-Lasky Corp. Rel. 26 Aug. 1918; Hon., NA. Sil., b&w, 5 reels. Dir., Fred Niblo. With Enid Bennett, Jack Holt, Robert McKim, Maude George. The working title of this picture was *The Pawn*.

Anne Mertons marries Hugo, a dishonest gambler, in San Francisco. He attacks her when she tries to stop him from committing a crime; in defense she shoots him and, believing him dead, flees to Honolulu. At sea she meets and falls in love with Rodney Heathe, the son of a sugar plantation owner. Hugo follows Anne to Honolulu and moves into a hut with Aho, a Hawaiian girl. He drags Anne to the hut, where she overhears his plot to join Koske, a German spy, in setting fire to Rodney's father's plantation. She escapes and warns Rodney, but they are too late to stop the plotters. Hugo accidentally perishes in the blaze.⁸

1919

The Rescuing Angel

Famous Players-Lasky Corp. Rel. 6 Apr. 1919; Hon., NA. Sil., b&w, 5 reels. Dir., Walter Edwards. With Shirley Mason, Forrest Stanley.

Angela Deming visits her uncle in Hawai'i, where she meets two wealthy men. Both men follow her home to the Mainland, precipitating numerous romantic complications.⁹

A Fallen Idol

Fox Film Corp. Rel. 18 May 1919; Hon., 5 Jan. 1921. Empire. Sil., b&w, 5 reels. Dir., Kenean Buel. With Evelyn Nesbit, Lillian Lawrence, Sidney Mason, Thelma Parker. Cited previously, with a different release date. Also, it now appears that the "picturesque and interesting" Hawaiian views praised by Variety were actually filmed near Miami, Florida.¹⁰

1920

Locked Lips

Universal Film Mfg. Co. Rel. 28 Apr. 1920; Hon., NA. Sil., b&w, 5 reels. Dir., William C. Dowlan. With Tsuru Aoki.

The story begins in Hawai'i, where an Island school teacher named Lotus Blossom (Aoki) discovers Parker, nearly dead from hunger. She nurses him back to health, and they eventually marry. Tiring of her, he deserts and assumes a new identity. Lotus later falls in love with a visiting Japanese artist, Komo, and follows him to the Mainland. There she takes a job as companion to Mrs. Stanwood, whose husband turns out to be Parker. To keep Lotus silent, Parker tries to kill her by poisoning her incense. Komo arrives just in time to save Lotus, and Parker instead dies from the fumes.¹¹

1937

Windjammer

Condor/RKO. Re. Oct. 1937; Hon., NA. Sound, b&w, 60 min. Dir., Ewing Scott. With George O'Brien, Constance Worth.

A yacht competing in the "annual yacht race to Honolulu" is rammed by a gun-runners' windjammer in a fog bank 300 miles from O'ahu. Held for ransom, the yachting party is finally rescued near Macao by a U.S. gunboat.¹²

1941

Navy Blues

Warner Bros. Rel. Aug. (?) 1941; Hon., 15 Jan. 1942, Princess. Sound, b&w, 108 or 109 min. Dir., Lloyd Bacon. With Ann Sheridan, Jack Oakie, Martha Raye, Jack Haley. Songs (In Waikiki and others) by Arthur Schwartz and Johnny Mercer.

A musical comedy about U.S. Navy crewmen in Honolulu and their girl friends, scheming to win a fleet gunnery contest. The only non-Caucasian roles were some dancers in a *lu'au* scene. Except for a brief stock shot of the Moana Hotel, it seems to have been filmed entirely in Hollywood. One critic described it as an "undernourished musical comedy with not too much of either commodity"; another noted its "really pathetic story . . . drivel. . . ." ¹³

1950

The Big Lift

Cited previously. The opening scene, filmed at Hickam Air Force Base in December 1949, does not appear in the print now shown on television. ¹⁴

1958

Run Silent, Run Deep

Hecht-Hill-Lancaster; dist., United Artists. Rel. 19 Mar. 1958; Hon., NA. Sound, b&w. 93 min. Dir., Robert Wise. With Clark Gable, Burt Lancaster, Jack Warden, Don Rickles.

A World War II submarine drama involving a sub commander (Gable), his executive officer (Lancaster), and their officers and crew. Although almost all of the picture takes place at sea, there are early scenes in the commander's Pearl Harbor office, his nearby residence, dockside, and just outside the harbor entrance—all of which were obviously filmed in California. Reviews in both *Variety* and the *New York Times* were highly favorable. ¹⁵

Space Master X-7

Regal; dist., 20th Century-Fox. Rel. 17 July 1958; Hon., NA. Sound, b&w, RegalScope, 71 min. Dir., Edward Bernds. With

Bill Williams, Lyn Thomas, Robert Ellis, Moe Howard (of the Three Stooges).

After a space probe returns from Mars bearing a lethal fungus called “blood rust,” a scientist’s girl friend is accidentally exposed to the fungus and threatens to become a Typhoid Mary. Unaware of the danger, she boards a plane to fly home to Hawai‘i. When the flight is halfway to Honolulu, the rust emerges from her purse and starts to cover the plane, which is quickly returned to Los Angeles, crash-landed, and burned. This was the only pre-Statehood science fiction movie about Hawai‘i. Reviewers deemed it “competent” and “passable.”¹⁶

NOTES

¹ Robert C. Schmitt, *Hawai‘i in the Movies 1898–1959* (Honolulu: HHS, 1988).

² *The American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States/Feature Films, 1911–1920* (Berkeley: U Calif. P., 1988) 51. Each entry includes the title, production and/or distribution company, national release date (abbreviated “Rel.”), Honolulu release date and name of theater (“Hon.”), whether silent, part talking, or sound, whether black and white (“b&w”) or color, running time (“min”) or length in feet or reels, name of director (“Dir.”), major members of cast (“With”), plot summary, site of location setting (if any), and, where pronounced, critics’ reactions. “NA” means not available.

³ *American Film Institute Catalog* 465.

⁴ *American Film Institute Catalog* 214.

⁵ *American Film Institute Catalog* 950.

⁶ *American Film Institute Catalog* 41.

⁷ *American Film Institute Catalog* 1040–1.

⁸ *American Film Institute Catalog* 590–1.

⁹ *American Film Institute Catalog* 766.

¹⁰ *American Film Institute Catalog* 261.

¹¹ *American Film Institute Catalog* 536.

¹² Jay Robert Nash and Stanley Ralph Ross, *The Motion Picture Guide, W–Z, 1927–1983* (Chicago: Cinebooks, 1987) 3870; *Variety Film Reviews 1934–1937*, vol. 5 (New York and London: Garland, 1983, entry for 20 Oct. 1937. Viewed by author on television 1989.

¹³ Nash and Ross, *The Motion Picture Guide, N–R, 1927–1983* (Chicago: Cinebooks, 1986) 2114; *Variety Film Reviews 1938–1942*, vol. VI (New York: Garland, 1983), entry for 13 Aug. 1941; HA, 15 Jan. 1942:6; Clive Hirschhorn, *The Hollywood Musical* (New York: Crown, 1981) 193; Leslie Halliwell, *Halliwell’s Film Guide*, 5th ed. (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1987) 690. Viewed by author 1990.

¹⁴ Viewed by author on television 1990.

¹⁵ Nash and Ross, *The Motion Picture Guide, N-R, 1927-1983* (1986) 2687; *Variety Film Reviews 1954-1958*, vol. 9, entry for 26 Mar. 1958; *The New York Times Film Reviews (1949-1958)* (New York: New York Times and Arno Press, 1970) 3048-3049. Viewed by author on television, 1991.

¹⁶ *Variety Film Reviews 1954-1958*, vol. 9, entry for 23 July 1958; Nash and Ross, *The Motion Picture Guide, S, 1927-1983* (1987) 3055; Bill Warren, *Keep Watching the Skies!*, vol. 11 (Jefferson & London: McFarland, 1986) 187-9.